Sam Borowsky

Blog 5

As I mentioned in my last blog, the goal for the Scoop team over the last couple weeks was to execute an initial release of our app. We were committed to doing this release last Saturday, March 21. Everything was planned and prepared carefully; during the week we sent out an introductory email to the selected test users explaining the purpose and concept of our app and nailed down much of the necessary functionality for an initial release, such as a live, flawless “Available Drivers” table. On Saturday, the plan was to manually install the app on all our test users’ phones and then our entire group was going to drive throughout the night. However, come Friday night and Saturday, we encountered some major setbacks that spoiled our hopes for the release. For one, we underestimated the amount of work that still remained on Friday night. At first, we believed that Friday night would merely require a couple hours worth of work to allow the user to edit his or her profile page, make certain pictures appear within the app, and perform some other trivial touch-ups. Unfortunately, implementing these improvements took us late into the night and, ultimately, around 3 AM, I made some change to the project that produced a stubborn error that crashed the app. At this point, I was so exhausted and scatterbrained that I could not resolve the error or finish implementing all the desired improvements. Thus, in a frantic last minute effort, our group got together with Professor Fox on Saturday morning to salvage the app so that it would be ready for the release. Professor fox helped us tremendously by fixing the error I produced and adding some much-needed functionality, such as an updateable user profile page. He set the user profile page up so that the user can upload his or her profile picture from the iPhone’s Camera Roll and edit the first name, last name, cell number, and car type fields. I have attached a picture of the improved user profile page to the end of this blog. After some time, the app was rescued and we transitioned to installing it on our test users’ phones. This process proved to be extremely problematic, as the app would only run properly on iPhones equipped with the iOS 8.1 operating system. For all other operating systems, the app would immediately crash upon launch. This was a surprising issue in the sense that we believed setting the app’s deployment target to iOS 6.0 would ensure that the app runs smoothly for all operating systems that are currently used. Sadly, this problem was the dagger that forced us to send an apologetic email to our test users saying that the initial release would have to be delayed.

Although this experience was very disappointing, it taught us some valuable lessons. Most importantly, we learned that we must manage our time more effectively; we cannot afford to leave so much work until a day before the deadline. We ended up in such a dilemma because we were still working on important improvements the night before and the day of the scheduled release. Next time, we will do all the necessary work several days before the promised release date. In a similar sense, we will be particularly mindful of the potential issues associating with installing the app on different operating systems. More specifically, we will test that the app runs smoothly on all possible operating systems days in advance of the next release date. Furthermore, I now understand the importance of “sandboxing” my work, which means making changes to/editing a copy of the existing project, so that the live version of the app remains functional and error free. Last Friday, I messed up terribly by working directly on the live version of the app. Professor Fox agrees that the failure we suffered last Saturday is valuable in that it opened our eyes to issues that can arise during a live installation/release. Our new goal is to perform the initial release next Wednesday, which we firmly believe will be a success because we are investigating the operating system issue. Also, we have identified some additional features that we want create further down the road, such as a functional news feed (dynamic table view) of recent drop-offs. On a final note, we still face a couple nagging issues, including certain pictures not appearing in the app. All in all, we have gained much insight from the setback we faced last weekend, and are very excited to redeem ourselves come Wednesday night.